

months after the invasion, the search was called off all together.

As Hans Blix, the former chief U.N. weapons inspector, said in a lecture last month, the United States preferred "to believe in faith based intelligence."

Today, American forces continue to serve bravely and with great honor in Iraq. But the war in Iraq has made it more likely—not less likely—that we will face terrorist attacks in American cities, and not just on the streets of Baghdad. The war has clearly made us less safe and less secure. It has made the war against al-Qaida harder to win.

As CIA Director Porter Goss told the Senate Intelligence Committee on February 16, we have created a breeding ground for terrorists in Iraq and a worldwide cause for the continuing recruitment of anti-American extremists.

He said:

The Iraq conflict, while not a cause of extremism, has become a cause for extremists . . . Islamic extremists are exploiting the Iraqi conflict to recruit new anti-U.S. jihadists . . . These jihadists who survive will leave Iraq experienced in and focused on acts of urban terrorism. They represent a potential pool of contacts to build transnational terrorist cells, groups, and networks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other countries.

Three and a half years after the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida is still the gravest threat to our national security, and the war in Iraq has ominously given al-Qaida new incentives, new recruits, and new opportunities to attack us.

According to CIA Director Goss, "al-Qaida is intent on finding ways to circumvent U.S. security enhancements to strike Americans and the homeland."

Admiral James Loy, Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, also warned the Intelligence Committee about the threat from al-Qaida. He said, "We believe that attacking the homeland remains at the top of al-Qaida's operational priority list . . . We believe that their intent remains strong for attempting another major operation here."

The danger was also emphasized by Robert Mueller, the FBI Director, who told the Intelligence Committee, "The threat posed by international terrorism, and in particular from al-Qaida and related groups, continues to be the gravest we face." He said, "al-Qaida continues to adapt and move forward with its desire to attack the United States using any means at its disposal. Their intent to attack us at home remains—and their resolve to destroy America has never faltered."

In addition to taking the focus off the real war on terror—the war against al-Qaida—the war in Iraq has cost us greatly in human terms.

Since the invasion began, we have lost more than 1500 servicemen and women. More than 11,500 have been wounded. That's the equivalent of a full Army division, and we only have 10 active divisions in the entire army. Despite recent progress, since the Iraqi

elections in January we have still lost more than one soldier a day.

We need to train the Iraqis for the stability of Iraq. But we also need to train them because our current level of deployment is not sustainable. Our military has been stretched to the breaking point, with threats in other parts of the world ever-present.

As the Defense Science Board told Secretary Rumsfeld last September, "Current and projected force structure will not sustain our current and projected global stabilization commitments."

LTG John Riggs said it clearly: "I have been in the Army 39 years, and I've never seen the Army as stretched in that 39 years as I have today." A full 32 percent of our military has already served two or more tours of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. That fact makes it harder for us to respond to threats elsewhere in the world.

The war has also undermined the Guard and Reserve. Forty percent of the troops in Iraq are Guard or Reservists, and we are rapidly running out of available soldiers who can be deployed.

The average tour for reservists recalled to active duty is now 320 days, close to a year. In the first Gulf War, it was 156 days; in Bosnia and Kosovo, 200 days. In December, General James Helmley, the head of the Army Reserves warned that the Reserve "is rapidly degenerating into a 'broken' force" and "is in grave danger of being unable to meet other operational requirements."

The families of our military, Guard and Reserves are also suffering. Troops in Iraq are under an order that prevents them ever from leaving active duty when their term of service is over.

A survey by the Defense Department last May found that reservists, their spouses, their families, and their employers are less supportive now of their remaining in the military than they were a year ago.

The war has clearly undermined the Pentagon's ability to attract new recruits and retain those already serving. In March, the active duty Army fell short of its recruiting goal by a full 32 percent. Every month this year, the Marines have missed their recruiting goal. The last time that happened was July 1995.

The Army Reserves are being hit especially hard. In March, it missed a recruiting goal by almost half, falling short by 46 percent.

To deal with its recruiting problems, the Army National Guard has increased retention bonuses from \$5,000 to \$15,000 and first-time signing bonuses from \$6000 to \$10,000. The Pentagon has raised the maximum age for Army National Guard recruits from 34 to 39. Without these changes, according to General Steven Blum, Chief of the Army National Guard, "The Guard will be broken and not ready the next time it's needed, either here at home or for war."

We all hope for the best in Iraq. We all want democracy to take root firmly and irrevocably.

Our men and women in uniform, and the American people deserve to know that the President has a strategy for success. They want to know how long it will take to train the Iraqi security forces to ably defend their own country so American men and women will no longer have to die in Iraq. They want to know when we will have achieved our mission, and when our soldiers will be able to come home with dignity and honor.

At a March 1 hearing in the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Abizaid, the leader of the Central Command, gave the clearest indication so far about when our mission might end.

General Abizaid said, "I believe that in 2005, the most important statement that we should be able to make is that in the majority of the country, Iraqi security forces will take the lead in fighting the counterinsurgency. That is our goal."

Speaking about the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, General Abizaid said, "I think in 2005 they'll take on the majority of the tasks necessary to be done." That's this year.

On March 27, General Casey, commanding General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq said, "By this time next year . . . assuming that the political process continues to go positively . . . and the Iraqi army continues to progress and develop as we think it will, we should be able to take some fairly substantial reductions in the size of our forces."

Our troops are clearly still needed to deal with the insurgency. Just as clearly, we need an effective training program to enable the Iraqis to be self-reliant.

But there is wide agreement that the presence of American troops fuels the insurgency. If the Iraqis make significant progress this year, it is perfectly logical to expect that more American troops will be able to return home.

Shortly after the elections in Iraq in January, the administration announced that 15,000 American troops that were added to provide security for the elections would return.

Additional reductions in our military presence, as Iraqis are trained to take over those functions, would clearly help take the American face off the occupation and send a clearer signal to the Iraqi people that we have no long-term designs on their country.

In US News and World Report in February, General Abizaid emphasized this basic point. He said "An overbearing presence, or a larger than acceptable footprint in the region, works against you . . . The first thing you say to yourself is that you have to have the local people help themselves."

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz stated in a hearing at the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 3, "I have talked to some of our commanders in the area. They believe that over the course of the next six months you will see whole areas of Iraq successfully handed over to the Iraqi army and